

Message Text

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SUBJECT: EDITORIAL IN THE IRISH TIMES SEPTEMBER 6, 1978

FOLLOWING EDITORIAL APPEARED IN THE IRISH TIMES
SEPTEMBER 6, 1978 UNDER HEADING CAMP DAVID:

THE CAMP DAVID NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN MR. BEGIN AND
PRESIDENT SADAT, WITH PRESIDENT CARTER IN THE
CHAIR, WERE DESCRIBED YESTERDAY BY THE EGYPTIAN
LEADER AS AMOUNTING TO AS IMPORTANT AN INITIATIVE
AS HIS JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM. MR. CARTER HIMSELF
HAS BEEN AT PAINS TO DISCOURAGE HIGH EXPECTATIONS
OF THE OUTCOME. THE SEARCH FOR PEACE, HE SAID AT
THE BEGINNING OF THE WEEK, WOULD DEMAND COMPROMISE
AND FLEXIBILITY BY BOTH SIDES, AND THE CHANCES OF
COMPLETE SUCCESS WERE "VERY REMOTE."

THIS ATTITUDE IS SENSIBLE AND REALISTIC, AS PAST
EXPERIENCE HAS SHOWN ONLY TOO CLEARLY, WHEN INITIAL
HIGH HOPES WERE SHOT DOWN. IF PROGRESS IS TO BE
MADE AT CAMP DAVID, THERE WILL HAVE TO BE NO OBVIOUS
WINNERS OR LOSERS. SOMEHOW OR OTHER, THERE WILL
HAVE TO BE A BALANCE OF CONCESSIONS, AND THE FORM
THIS WILL TAKE WILL DEPEND, IN THE FIRST PLACE, ON
THE POLITICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SKILLS OF THE
AMERICAN PRESIDENT, WHO CONSEQUENTLY IS SEEN TO BE
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TAKING A CONSIDERABLE RISK WITH HIS PERSONAL
AUTHORITY.

MR. SADAT ALSO IS GAMBLING FOR HIGH STAKES.
UNOFFICIAL, BUT PLAUSIBLE, REPORTS FROM CAIRO
SUGGEST THAT HE BELIEVES HIS JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM
HAS NOT PAID OFF IN ANY WAY, AND THAT THE TIME HAS

COME FOR HIM TO RE-ALIGN EGYPT BEHIND THE
TRADITIONAL ASPIRATIONS OF THE ARAB WORLD,
AND TO REPAIR THE FENCES WHICH WERE DAMAGED BY HIS
SOLO GESTURE LAST YEAR. IF THIS IS THE CASE, HE MAY
PROVE LESS FLEXIBLE NOW THAN IN THE PAST.

ON THE SURFACE MR. BEGIN IS THE MOST CHEERFUL AND
OPTIMISTIC OF THE THREE MEN. DOES THIS MEAN THAT HE
HAS SOMETHING NEW TO OFFER - OR THAT HIS BARGAINING
POSITION IS SO FAMILIAR TO HIM THAT ITS RE-ASSERTION
WILL BE SIMPLY A MATTER OF ROUTINE? IN THE LONG TERM,
OF COURSE, AN OBVIOUS REFUSAL TO COMPROMISE, OR TO
APPROACH THE ITEMS ON THE AGENDA FROM A NEW DIRECTION,
COULD BE AS FATEFUL FOR HIM (AND FOR ISRAEL) AS OTHER
CAUSES OF FAILURE COULD BE FOR MR. CARTER AND MR.
SADAT.

THE ONLY NEW ELEMENT AT PRESENT VISIBLE IS THE
GREATER DEGREE OF AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT. MR. CARTER
HAS BEEN AT PAINS TO INSIST THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WILL
NOT TRY TO IMPOSE CONDITIONS OR TERMS ON THE PARTIES.
HE SEES HIS FUNCTION EXCLUSIVELY AS THAT OF MEDIATOR.
AT THE SAME TIME, THE POWER AND AUTHORITY OF THE
UNITED STATES IS SUCH THAT ITS VERY PRESENCE AT THE
NEGOTIATIONS IS AN INFLUENTIAL FACTOR. EGYPT AND
ISRAEL BOTH NEED ITS PATRONAGE AND SUPPORT.
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AMERICAN LOYALTY TO ISRAEL IS A TRADITION WHICH MR.
CARTER HAS REGULARLY AFFIRMED WILL NOT BE BROKEN. AT
THE SAME TIME, THE INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL AND
ECONOMIC DRIFT IS SUCH THAT WASHINGTON CANNOT AFFORD
TO OFFEND THE CONSERVATIVE, MODERATE (AND OIL-BEARING)
ARAB STATES. IN THIS CONTEXT, MR. CARTER HAS TO
TREAD AS DELICATELY AND PERFORM AS ADROITLY AS HIS
GUESTS.

THE MOST THAT CAN - OR, INDEED, SHOULD - BE HOPED
FOR IS AN AGREEMENT ON PRINCIPLES, NEITHER TOO
DETAILED NOR TOO VAGUE, WHICH WILL ENABLE DIRECT
NEGOTIATIONS TO BE RESUMED BETWEEN EGYPT AND ISRAEL,
THUS ENABLING MR. SADAT TO REVISE HIS OPINION THAT HIS
NOVEMBER INITIATIVE HAS BEEN WASTED, AND MR. BEGIN
TO CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY OF A NEW APPROACH TO THE
CENTRAL PROBLEM OF THE FUTURE OF THE WEST BANK.
BERRINGTON

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